Afterword

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ON 16 DECEMBER 1991, I gave the seventh Sol M. Malkin Lecture in Bibliography on "The Future of Rare Book Libraries" at the School of Library Service (SLS), Columbia University." (In assessing this honor, bear in mind that I am the person principally responsible for selecting Malkin Lecturers.) The Book Arts Press published the first six Malkin Lectures as separate pamphlets, most of them elegantly designed and printed by the Stinehour Press—but not mine: The Trustees of Columbia University closed their SLS at the end of the 1991–92 academic year; on the day I gave the Malkin Lecture, I contented myself by putting its text onto ExLibris, the (then new) electronic bulletin board, and I moved on to deal with other matters.

There has been some continuing interest in the lecture in the dozen years since it was first given. In 2002, I reprised it at UCLA and at Rare Book School in Charlottesville, with commentary—with the result that I am now receiving requests for both lecture and commentary. It seems sensible to put both into print now: accordingly, here follows the original 1991 lecture (as delivered except for the removal of a few topical comments), followed by a commentary, and—experience teaches me nothing—accompanied by some current prognostications on the future of rare book libraries, much enriched by my reading of the articles in this issue of *Library Trends.*

1991 LECTURE

According to the Chinese lunar calendar, we are just now coming to the end of the Year of the Goat (hold that thought, please). For me, however, 1991 has been the year of the Crystal Ball.

In February of this year, I gave a lecture entitled "Reflections by the Captain of the Iceberg" to the Colophon Club of San Francisco in which I

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made various prognostications regarding events in the rare book world during the next ten years. This lecture will be published in a few months by the Bibliographical Society of London as the coda to a volume of essays celebrating the centenary of the Society.

Then in March of this year, at a conference in Iowa organized by Timothy Barrett to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the introduction of papermaking into the United States, I gave a talk which I was asked to repeat in September at the Madison, Wisconsin, "Whither the Book?" conference organized by Barbara Tetenbaum: my title there was "The Future of the Book (If Any)." This talk will appear in print either in the proceedings of the Wisconsin conference or (if those proceedings are not published separately) then most likely in W. Thomas Taylor's new journal, *Bookways*.

Last month, I gave a Hanes Lecture at the University of North Carolina on "Education for Books as Physical Objects," and I read a revised version of this paper, in which I had a fair amount to say about the future of rare book librarianship, a week later at the Houghton Library at Harvard; this lecture will eventually be published by North Carolina. [2003: None of these lectures was ever published.] I was honored to have been invited to deliver the 1991 Hanes Lecture; I have fewer reasons for pride on being invited to deliver this, the 1991 Malkin Lecture, given the composition of the selection committee. If I have no reason for self-congratulation on being invited to speak to you tonight, nevertheless I am pleased to have the opportunity to round off my collection of 1991 FutureSpeaks with a meditation on "The Future of Rare Book Libraries."

There are few better ways of making a fool of yourself than by trying to predict the future. In 1965, the political scientist Karl Deutsch was asked to speculate about life in the year 2000, then thirty-five years away. His assignment, he said, was like being asked to talk about the year 1800 from the vantage point of the year 1765 (predict the coming of steam power and the effects of industrialization, the revolutions in France and America, and the rise of mass armies), or to talk about the year 1900 from the vantage point of the year 1865 (predict the use of electricity as a source of energy and the development of the internal combustion engine, the rise of labor unions, and the high-water mark of imperialism and colonialism) (Deutsch, 1967, p. 659).

But if predicting the future is a foolhardy undertaking, it is not always an impossible one; and the exercise is a potentially useful and possibly essential mechanism for dealing with areas of concern in which rapid change is occurring.

I am convinced that rare book libraries both in the United States and worldwide are in fact at the beginning of a succession of cataclysmic transformations. The most important of these changes will be caused by the increasing disinclination of most general research libraries over the next several decades to continue to maintain large, permanent collections of paper-based books of any sort, rare or non-rare.

This is not to predict that research libraries are going to go entirely out of the codex book business, but rather to say that they will increasingly look upon their current book stock as a convenience collection, to be used and eventually disposed of without remorse. Much of the paper-based information we use at present is already generated from electronic originals owned by publishers and by them constantly updated, corrected, expanded, improved, and regularly republished in paper-based form for the use of purchasers in a handy codex format. In the future, readers are increasingly going to have direct online access to electronic text and data files containing the materials they require; and increasingly, they will perceive that they do not ever need and do not ever want access in printed form to the bulk of this material—a circumstance already routinely the case with users of large online databases. The big change is yet to come, because most journals and monographs are not yet available to their end-users in machine-readable form. But soon enough they will be; and then, there go the stacks.

I do not mean to suggest that our descendants are going to be doing all of their reading from CRT screens; it is already very easy to make a convenient printed hard copy version from texts accessible in machine-readable form, and it is becoming easier and cheaper to do so all the time. But the more likely the master text is machine-based rather than paper-based, the more likely that paper copies are going to be used and viewed as the temporary physical manifestations of a permanent electronic ideal. We're already used to this idea: when we buy a paperback copy of (say) a Hawthorne novel in an airport bookshop to read on a long plane ride in case we don't like the movie, it's unlikely that we're ever going to form much of an emotional relationship with the particular copy of the paperback we've just bought. We may well have another and better printed or better edited copy at home or in the institutional library we generally use. The paperback we just bought at the airport serves an immediate purpose and (if it is brought home at all) is consigned to a back bedroom, or a weekend house, or donated to the public library's annual sale, or eventually just tossed out: an object which had a purpose which it has now fully fulfilled. In no sense is the *text* of the Hawthorne novel endangered by our carelessness with the particular airport bookshop copy at hand. Expand this example to include more and more of the books published today, not only reference books but standard texts of all sorts and all ages. The scholarly press is full of news of massive projects to put into machine-readable form vast quantities of material ranging from the collected works of every poet mentioned in the *New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* to the entire corpus of the literature of Latin and Greek antiquity.

Paper-based printed texts, especially as regards the current monographic literature, continue at present to be indispensable; but every year from now on a little more of that literature will be available online, and every year more and more of us will be using it in that form. It seems inevitable that

soon enough the texts of practically everything that anybody is interested in, new or old, poetry or prose, popular or arcane, boring or interesting, English or Sanskrit, is going to be available online, the more so because of the simplicity of the technology involved. The equipment necessary to convert a printed paper-based text into machine-readable form is already relatively inexpensive, and the requisite technology is becoming constantly cheaper and ever more ubiquitous. Author, subject, genre, period, and other special-interest groups are forming everywhere (online, of course!), and it seems entirely likely that (for example) *every* major edition of *every* work of *every* author of *every* age in whom there is *any* general or academic interest will be available in machine-readable form before very long—and if you grant this assumption, then I think that you must then also agree that the university library, already changing quickly at the moment, is going to change much more quickly still in the near future. Indeed, university libraries are already under every kind of pressure to convert their paper-based holdings into machine-readable form; over the long or possibly even the medium haul, they cannot afford the cost of maintaining ever-growing collections of objects which require separate cataloging and physical preparation, separate housing, separate housecleaning and preservation procedures, and separate access conventions.

These changes in general research libraries will have an enormous impact on the future of rare book libraries. Until not so long ago, a library's rare books have differed from the library's other books simply in degree: rare books are more valuable, or more fragile, or more scarce, or more brittle, or more *something* than regular books, but still measured along the same scale. General libraries have always been interested in the contents of books whereas rare book libraries are more especially concerned with the container in which those contents are to be found; but they're all books, the same elements at both ends of the spectrum.

What is going to happen to rare book libraries when the general research libraries to which they are connected begin to lose interest in storing large numbers of paper-based books, new or not so new, in their stacks? General libraries have in fact been preparing themselves for moving out of the codex book storage business for many decades, as one substitute mechanism after another has emerged and become cheap enough for widespread use. The increasingly pervasive availability of texts reformatted in electronic form will tip the balance. As the use of information derived from machine-readable sources accelerates in general research libraries, a gulf will widen between them and their rare book departments, since almost by definition the contents of rare book libraries do not consist of substitutes but of the real McCoy—books valuable as objects because of their age, the circumstances of their manufacture, their beauty, their associations with former owners, their annotations or other interesting signs of use, the nonrepro-

ducible quality of their design or their illustrations or their bindings—valuable as objects, as something you can pick up and hold in your hands.

General libraries are beginning to see rare book libraries as something increasingly different from themselves, to think of rare book libraries rather as museums whose patrons tend more to look at books than actually read them; and, while the place of museums in our culture in general is a well-established one, their place on academic campuses and within general research libraries is not so well established: many educational institutions are going to become increasingly dubious about the appropriateness of maintaining museums of the book on their campuses. Indeed, I think that many thoughtful general research library administrators are already uneasy about the resources required for the adequate care and feeding of their rare book departments and that they wonder whether the activities of such departments still fit under the umbrella of the services appropriately provided by the libraries for which they are responsible. In any event, and whether or not library administrators are now interested in this matter, it is certain that, soon enough, senior university administrators are going to be fascinated by it, and for a simple, compelling reason.

You will have heard: universities are short of money these days, seemingly worse than ever. The reasons for the shortage are many and various; they are as close as the pages of this morning's newspaper. State and local governments, themselves strapped for money, have less to give the universities they support; in the private sector, expenses are continuing to rise faster than income, despite relentlessly steady tuition hikes. In university libraries both public and private, the situation is grim at the moment, and getting steadily worse. Research libraries continue to need to furnish services over a constantly widening range while being provided, at least relatively speaking, with constantly decreasing resources with which to do so. Over the past two decades, for instance, libraries have had to open up enormous wedges in their budget pies to pay for automation; very few institutions enlarged their library's share of the total budget in order to pay for these increased costs. Similarly, libraries are providing various sorts of online services unheard of twenty years ago; they have been relatively unsuccessful in finding new sources of money with which to pay for these services, and the result is poverty all around.

This problem is not a new one; academic and research libraries have been grimly aware for a long time of their inability to keep up with the increase of human knowledge. They have aggressively engaged in networking and resource-sharing activities designed to help them cope with increased responsibilities coupled with decreased funding; but the resources available to them have by now shrunk to a point where rare book departments within larger, general research libraries are having to shoulder a much greater share of the burden than has up to now been generally true.

This has not until very recently been generally so; throughout the 1970s and most of the 1980s, rare book units have more often than not tended to be protected from overall library budget and staff cuts; library directors have given their rare book operations most-favored-nation status, perhaps in part because rare books are attractive for enhancing the library's public relations base on campus. Moreover, directors tend to like the parties, the festivities, and the other excitements that rare book departments can generate: an exhibition opening is easier to celebrate than the acquisition of a new circulation system or the implementation of changes in an online catalog. Budget cuts in university libraries have now been so severe for so long, however, that rare book departments, too, are feeling the pain.

I want to quote to you from a letter I received a couple of weeks ago from a former student of mine who is Curator of Rare Books on the flagship campus of an institution generally thought to be one of the better American western state universities (I have changed certain information to disguise the identity of the student and the institution, but I have not altered any of the student's substantive comments):

> You may [he writes] have heard some of the fiscal horrors that are being visited upon us by the governor and the state legislators. The library is particularly hard hit, and this has encouraged our director to wield his battle axe, particularly because the position of Head of Special Collections is vacant, and thus there is no one around to object to what he is doing. What he is doing is dismantling Special Collections; he has already uprooted the Russian studies collection; the curator will probably be turned into a regular services librarian. My job is to go; he has told me not to count on my job to continue after next year. Rare books will be dumped on our state historical collection, the literary manuscripts on the University Archives. These are both departments for which there is a mandate to maintain them, otherwise he might be tempted to close Archives as well. The position of Head of Special Collections will be eliminated.
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> None of this is to save money; that is only the ostensible reason. This is all politics, the director working desperately to save himself and his position, since he has had a great deal of public criticism for some bad decisions. In the short term it may possibly do him some good; in the long run it will ruin the University's claim to be a research institution. The VIP's at this institution who make the decisions are all hard core scientists; they care very little about the humanities and are perfectly ready to sell all the rare books to the first dealer who shows up on the doorstep.

Note that my former student attributes the decline of his rare book department not so much to lack of money as to changing priorities within his institution. A shrewd characterization: it's not simply that university libraries cannot afford to run rare book operations any more; rather, it's that increasingly they don't want to. In this attitude, they are joined by an ever-increasing number of metropolitan public libraries: this month's *American*

Libraries reports that portions of the rare book collection at the Kansas City, Missouri, Public Library will go up for auction early next year ("Rare Books up for Grabs in Kansas City," 1991, p. 1018).

The library's director comments, "This approach will result in the materials being placed in collections where they will be appropriately preserved and any research value fully realized, while yielding a potentially significant exchange on these assets for the library's endowment fund."

We must remember that for most readers, the change from paper-based information sources to electronically based information sources will be a great improvement over the present situation; information will be cheaper and more widely and easily available to them in more places; once acquired, it will be easier to manipulate: to copy, excerpt, index, translate, store, and retrieve. We must not let whatever personal affection *we* have for books as physical objects blind us to the fact that most persons are, when push comes to shove, quite free of emotional relationships with the physical containers by which their information needs are met.

The end of the book as physical object in libraries academic and public is not quite yet in sight. At least in the foreseeable future, it is unlikely that all machine-readable texts will invariably work better than any paper-based ones. Printed books are going to continue to be produced for a good long time to come, especially those with complicated formats; top-of-the-line firms (like the Stinehour Press) which specialize in illustrated books will prosper. Still, slowly but surely we are beginning to view codex books in two, quite different ways: on the one hand as convenient and disposable printouts, and on the one hand as art or museum objects. Libraries are susceptible to fashion; what one library does, another library will imitate—in general, research libraries are a lot more like each other than they are different from each other. Just as soon as the technology allows—or perhaps a bit sooner—trend-setting research libraries are going to go out of the permanent paper storage business, and the great majority of other libraries will follow them, lickety split. Most research libraries will not want to maintain much more than convenience collections of paper-based materials, and they will begin the substantial deaccession of their present book holdings in successive decimations which will include at least many of their rare books. We are about to enter a period in which we shall see the wholesale destruction of institutionally based rare book collections.

Not everything will go; an institution is likely to retain in their original physical formats materials which are part of its own history. Books notable for their physical beauty or their sentimental appeal will have a good chance of retention. Books which are particularly good examples of their physical genres or formats will routinely be retained: books in original bindings and in fresh condition, for example. A local connection or relevance will become more and more important as a measure by which to determine the retention or discarding of paper-based books; the focus of special collections will

more and more follow regional lines. Professionally trained rare book librarians are themselves going to have a major role to play in the downsizing of their collections, for they are the persons best trained to make the decisions on what books should be retained in their original formats and what books should be deaccessioned. In the more or less immediate future (that is to say, during the next decade) rare book librarians will be asked to contract their on-campus book stack space. They will thus need to establish classes of books which can be sent to remote storage. Over the longer haul, they will have to set up criteria for separating their rare book sheep from their rare book goats, permanently deaccessioning a great many sheep, retaining a modest number of locally relevant goats. (Remember? 1991 is the Year of the Goat.) Many of these deaccession decisions cannot intelligently be made by a single institution in ignorance of what other institutions are doing along the same lines; if we don't work together, then we'll all tend to save the same classes of materials, and we'll all tend to throw out the same classes of materials. Few copies of the Shakespeare First Folio are going to be sent off to a sanitary landfill; but practically all copies of practically every nonillustrated periodical are at risk, as is the great ruck of just-plain, nonsplendid printed books from virtually all places and periods, especially if they are in poor physical condition.

Physical bibliographers are well aware that the story a book has to tell does not end with its text. At this podium on a similar occasion exactly a year ago, Tom Tanselle eloquently set forth the ways in which a *book* and a *work,* the container and its contents, are different. In his 1990 Malkin Lecture (published as *Libraries, Museums, and Reading,* 1991), he described the current national enthusiasm for what is called preservation microfilming, and he argued that the originals should be retained even after they have been filmed. Microfilming as a preservation mechanism has great limitations. We can with absolute confidence expect that our ability to reformat library materials will continue to improve. The list of reformatting devices employed by libraries during the past century is a long one: photography, the photostat, microfilm, cheap offset lithography, xerography, video disc technology, the electronic digitization of texts and now of images: Microfilming, after all, is simply one of the chronological steps along the long preservation way. Later generations of students will always need access to the originals in order to derive new levels of information from them as the feasibly available technology improves. It is the responsibility of rare book librarians to see that suitable copies do survive. Rare book librarians must take the responsibility for devising regional, national, and international plans for ensuring the survival of representative examples of the widest possible range of materials retained in their original physical format. They will not be able to save much of anything in its original format; but they must find ways to save something of everything.

Rare book librarians can, and must, do more than this. They must

embrace a new role as curators of museum objects and expand that role. There isn't room for many museums of the book as such either in this country or worldwide; there is, however, far more room for museums of the history of communication. We need to work toward the creation of institutions concerned with the history of the communication of ideas whether through books, printed and manuscript, or through graphic images, or through film and video, or through digitized images and sounds—in short, we need to take as our province and responsibility the history of words and—and especially—the history of the physical entities which now serve or which have served to transmit those words.

This mission overlaps that of art museums but only to a limited extent: by and large, art museums are not generally concerned with the history of words as such. There is an overlap between book museums and art museums in the area of visual images, but the redundancy is one that we're already used to and know how to deal with; you are as likely to find a copy of an old engraving or other print in a large research library as in a large art museum, and the chances indeed are that the library will have cataloged the print better (and thus make it more accessible) than the museum has, especially if the print originally came out of a book.

By no means all universities are going to get out of the rare book business, even if (if I am correct) most institutions now possessing rare book collections are going to downsize them, and many more are, indeed, going to leave the field altogether. Rare book librarians are going to have to cope with the fact that their institutional bases and funding sources are quite likely to shift, and they are going to have to be increasingly adroit at finding new homes for their collections and new justifications for their retention in their original physical formats.

Institutions change and adapt, or they fail: I remind you that the idea of college and university collapse is not a new one in this country; G. Edward Evans has suggested that at least as many colleges and universities in this country have failed as have survived during the last three centuries. Remember please that our society has historically tended to be quite unsentimental in its insistence that one generation make way for another—perhaps this is nowhere more clear than in New York City, where the life expectancy of physical structures tends to be very limited indeed. Vast numbers of old books have thus far been acquired by and housed in our nation's libraries, first, because the best way to get access to the contents of those books was by owning actual copies, and, second, because the cost of maintaining those books in their original formats was thought to be bearable. But now there is another way, and we must deal with the changes the new way will create.

You may be thinking that these changes are too drastic to occur quickly. But remember what happened to wood engravers between about 1870 and about 1890, a twenty-year period during which the photographically

generated photo-engraving virtually wiped them out as a profession. Remember that, in 1900, almost nobody had access to an automobile in this country; less than a generation later, almost everybody did. Change can happen quickly; we have to guard against the belief that things will change, but not too much, and not too fast.

My colleague on the School of Library Service faculty, Jessica Gordon, likes to point out that one of the chief difficulties in predicting the future lies not so much in getting the facts right as in predicting an accurate timeline; in the 1960s, for example, it was predicted that computers would put people out of work, something that did not happen to any particular extent either in the 1960s or even in the 1970s, though we were getting used to the notion. In the 1980s, when computers *did* begin to put people out of work, the idea was by then a commonplace one, and it was accepted without much social unrest as a fact of life.

Tonight I have predicted a future in which a new world of electronically generated information will supersede our present world of print-based information, but I may very well have my timelines wrong; these changes may not happen as soon or as much over the next thirty years or so as I think they are going to. O Lord, you too may be thinking to yourself, make me wholly machine-readable—but not yet. But as you pray, please bear in mind the possibility that though my timelines may be wrong, my conclusions are probably not: sooner or later, the book is going to go the way of the horse.

2003 Commentary

In 1991, what we now call the World Wide Web was only just coming into being, and I unaware of even its existence until 1994, when Mosaic (the predecessor of Netscape) made its first public appearance. In my Malkin Lecture, I show at best a modest understanding of the extent which electronic communications would invade academic (and indeed all) life, and I greatly underestimate the extent to which the digitization of original texts and images (rare and otherwise) would become a practical imperative. This being said, I think that the substance of my 1991 predictions are still relevant. The codex book *is* going the way of the horse: a noble beast, but one increasingly used for recreational purposes, decreasingly used elsewhere.

In 1991, my concern was with the continuing role of special collections within research libraries. In their articles, both Prochaska and Traister worry about this relationship, both of them fearing the progressive marginalization of special collections. My own current fears are centered on the long-range role of research libraries as a whole and not simply with the special collections within them. Special collections units have almost always had to argue for an adequate share of their parent library's resources. At some academic institutions, the news is good, as Kelsey demonstrates in his article on the new Elmer L. Andersen Library at the University of Minnesota. In general, however, most of even the largest and most prominent Ameri-

can research university libraries are trying to cope (*pace* Hewitt/Panitch) with special collections materials that increase at a much swifter pace than either the staff or the physical space necessary to handle them. And if institutional priorities de-emphasize all traditional libraries in the future, special collections will, even more than usual, be just one more mouth in an increasingly hungry nest.

Keep an eye on the nation's independent research libraries: collectively, they know what they are about, with administrative and governance structures capable of reacting swiftly and effectively to change. Chaison argues the case convincingly in her account of the research collections at the American Antiquarian Society; her article may be taken as a case study, representative of the environment in many of the IRLA (and similar) libraries. Allen's article points out that the holdings of these libraries are already of central importance. Independent research libraries are likely to be an increasingly important part of the rare book landscape, as they absorb materials given to them or otherwise acquired both from municipal public libraries and (as Saenger's article suggests) from academic institutions no longer willing or able to retain various classes of special collections material.

All institutionally housed special collections of printed objects will be under increasing pressure in the coming decades to rationalize their holdings and to get rid of materials not directly in scope. The trading of rare materials between institutions should and will become much more common than at present, with participating parties simultaneously strengthening the collections they care most about and deaccessioning materials to which there is insufficient local commitment. Such rationalizations will not be able to absorb all of the nation's unwanted rare books, however. Regional and national centers are going to be needed for special collections materials that have lost local support—and, finally, international centers. The care and feeding of rare books as physical objects will continue to be very expensive; these centers are most likely to avoid the Spartans' fate at Thermopylae if, like today's independent research libraries, they can convincingly define their collecting goals and objectives to the broadest possible publics.

Since 1991, the job market in rare books has deteriorated. My professional career has centered on education for rare books and special collections, both master's level training (about 400 persons took one or more of my descriptive bibliography courses at Columbia University between 1971 and 1992; contributors to this issue De Stefano, Jones, Streit, and Traister are all survivors) and continuing education (since 1983, about 3,200 persons have attended one or more five-day courses at Rare Book School). I have attended RBMS preconferences without fail since my first one in 1974 (in Charlottesville: who knew?), and throughout this period have shown up at most of the major ABAA antiquarian book fairs. I have tried to stay in touch with former Columbia rare book program students (an endeavor made easier by the circumstance that Rare Book School functions as a sum-

mer camp for many of them). I have fairly frequent contact, one way or another, with a considerable number of rare book, manuscript, and special collections librarians currently at work in United States institutions.

In my thirty-plus years in the field, I have never encountered a job market like the present one. As I pointed out in 1991, entry-level professional positions in rare books and special collections libraries were beginning to dry up; since then, the pickings have continued to remain slim.

The imperative for rare book and special collections personnel to learn new skills has in general not diminished the necessity to retain the old ones. As Traister points out in his article, rare book librarians—more than ever—need to possess the basic reference skills needed to work (especially, but not only) with older materials. The article in this issue of *Library Trends* I find most interesting and important is Abby Smith's excellent "Authenticity and Affect: When Is a Watch Not a Watch?" Smith addresses a central issue head-on: what should be preserved in special collections departments, whether artifactual or digital, and she speaks eloquently to the need for digitally literate curators, pointing out that the "precious incunabula of the digital age . . . will not endure long unless they are collected and curated today."

But as I read the skills she convincingly lists as necessary for the special collections librarian of the future, I worry about finding paragons not only able but willing to take on digital duties while at the same time possessing the linguistic and historical cultural background to function effectively in a rare book environment; I have similar worries when I read the Streit/Browar article about fund-raising imperatives and De Stefano's fascinating account of the skills needed by those concerned with moving-image collections. A desire to digitize is not a motive that currently attracts many persons to rare books; most people do not go into special collections work because of a passion for fund-raising. Many rare book librarians are tempted to respond to such imperatives by saying (or at least thinking): of course I can do that. The question is, do I want to—especially at the salary offered? Rare book and special collections librarians are well aware of their collective responsibility not to deprive the future of the past. Unfortunately, their level of institutional authority is almost invariably insufficient for them to fulfill this responsibility.

It nevertheless remains the case that the future of rare books as physical objects in this country depends to a vital extent on the quality of personnel attracted to the field of rare book and special collections librarianship. One of the most important tasks in front of the profession is to develop strategies by which competent persons are not only attracted to the field but are also given a reasonable opportunity to find work in it; the ARL initiatives Hewitt and Panitch describe at the end of their article are very welcome indeed.

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